

Remote Ready



Best Practices for Remote Work



A wide array of literature concerning best practices for remote work has sprung into the public eye in recent years, especially given the tragedy of the Coronavirus and the strained working adjustments that have ensued. The practices below have been honed by my own remote work experiences.

In concert with the Productivity and Work-Life Balance PDFs (see www.remote-ready.org/other-resources/), consider the below ideas to help you in your own remote exploration. What other tips have worked well for you?



[Office Distractions](#)



[Daily Rhythms](#)

[The Greatness of Placelessness](#)



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Office Distractions

1. Office Distractions

We all experience workdays brimming with positivity. You begin the morning prepared with tangible goals, timelines, and desired outcomes. Yet 15 conversations, three unexpected phone calls, and two new meetings later, you wonder where the day went!

Traditional and remote office environments alike present barriers to focus. Consider the below tips for a remote set-up:

- **A *Please Do Not Disturb* sign.** A sign directly expresses a need to focus. Explain to your cohabitants that the occasional goal of this sign is not to ward them off or become standoffish, but to maintain the productivity needed to quickly complete important tasks. This will subsequently, and paradoxically, enable more genuine focus on later conversation and time with them.
- **Your new coworkers.** Remote work may add some new *co-workers* to your life: children, pets, and other family members. Be sure to set some parameters. *Gamifying* your alone time or exchanging promises of play for sessions of uninterrupted focus may help. Check out this article from Teresa Douglas for 7 great tips on working from home with kids:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/work-from-home-kids-coronavirus>

- **Earnest conversations.** Talk with your manager and/or team. Explain the challenges encountered in your day-to-day telework. Propose solutions and don't merely point out issues. It is likely others are experiencing similar difficulties. Consider using the STATE acronym proposed in the popular book *Crucial Conversations*.¹ **S**hare your facts. **T**ell your story. **A**sk for others' paths. **T**alk tentatively. **E**ncourage testing.²

¹ Patterson et al. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. 2012.

² Ibid, p154.

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Daily Rhythms

2. Daily Rhythms

Our lives are governed by daily rhythms, patterns both internal and external. One undervalued aspect of working from home is the ability to connect more wholesomely with these daily cycles. External factors tend to disrupt: office spaces prohibit certain behaviors, traffic slows you down, and on-site colleagues are more prone to interrupting your plans. Try the suggestions below to uncover some of the hidden blessings of remote work:

- **Outdoor time.** Nature is restorative to the psyche. In many parts of the country, the coming spring season is the perfect opportunity to emerge from your dwelling. Office workers tend to be cooped up during the nicest parts of the day. You no longer are! Take advantage of your surroundings and find some time to get outside.
- **The 90-second rule.** This idea may seem too “out there”, but since you’ve read this far, you may as well give it a try! Take a moment to look up. Blink. Clear your head. Find any object and walk towards it (I demoed on a nearby window curtain). Fixate intently on your selection for 90 seconds. While you may find it surprisingly difficult to lend it your undivided attention, give it your very best go. Don’t shift your gaze. You may find that this exercise sheds light on the beauty and complexity of even mundane things in a profound and inexplicably different way.
- **Movement.** Give yoga, exercise, or full body stretching a try. Work on your breathing. Walk around. Get creative! Countless Internet tools exist to provide inspiration and guide you through the steps.
- **Taking a load off.** You will get fewer concerned looks laying down in your living room than in your conference room. Feeling sick, stressed, or anxious? Take care of yourself. You have the freedom to walk around your home, melt into a couch, or just unwind for a few minutes. Take some

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Daily Rhythms (continued)

time to connect with your loved ones and connect with someone important to you.

- **Gratitude.** Cultivate it! Be thankful and approach your counterfactual: another situation that you could find yourself in normal times. What negative things might you be stuck with? An unpleasant drive or metro ride? Preparing for the workday or in stiff office clothing? Do you regularly take the time to connect with your thoughts in this way? An 'attitude of gratitude' is a crucial practice for well-being and relaxation. What better opportunity than the present to give it a go?

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The Greatness of Placelessness

3. The Greatness of Placelessness

One hindrance to the establishment of a remote team lies in the infrastructure needed to set it all up. The fear is the following: once you strip away the office walls, furniture, or core working hours, what remains to bind the team together?³

The answer is whatever you make of it. Rapid technological advances have connected individuals, communities, and entire countries as never before. Working remotely permits people to be there for their families, and there for their jobs. It allows you to hire placelessly, bringing the best and the brightest from around the country together.

Finally, and most importantly: remote work compels everyone involved to cultivate genuine ties among, within, and across teams. We don't merely "work next to each other."

³ Bryan Mills. *Virtual Culture: The Way We Work Doesn't Work Anymore*. 2017. p35.